

Recent Advances in Insect Virology¹

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I wish to express my mahalo to Dr. Minoru Tamashiro, Dr. Frank Haramoto and other members of the program committee for this invitation and for making it possible to return to Hawaii.

When a speaker is provided the freedom to select and review a subject, he is under great temptation to stress areas of his expertise. I have yielded to this temptation. However, I hope to be excused because I shall discuss the studies made by my students and myself with insects found in Hawaii, and especially with viruses that originally came from Hawaii.

Insect virology has progressed extensively during the past decade, and I shall discuss mainly the progress made during this period. Advances have occurred in biochemistry, molecular biology, cytopathology, pathophysiology, host susceptibility, new forms of viruses and strains, microbial control, and epizootiology. Since I do not have time to review all of these aspects, I shall confine myself to the following seven areas: (1) types of insect viruses, (2) virus strains and the basis for their separation, (3) mode of virus invasion through the midgut, (4) interactions of viruses, (5) virus toxin, (6) use of virus in microbial control, and (7) epizootiology of virus diseases.

I have listed the general types of viruses that occur in insects (Table 1). I have excluded viruses that also infect the arthropod vectors of plant and animal viruses, although these viruses cause pathologies in the arthropods. Up to a decade ago, the most common types were the nuclear- and cytoplasmic-polyhedrosis and the granulosis viruses. These three viruses attack primarily Lepidoptera, but the nuclear-polyhedrosis viruses also commonly infect a group of hymenopterous insects, the sawflies. Recently, other orders of insects have been found susceptible to the polyhedrosis viruses. The sigma virus of *Drosophila* and the sacbrood virus of honeybee have also been known for many years.

During the past decade, a large number of nonoccluded viruses, that are similar to the sacbrood virus, have been reported from different insects, such as the honeybee, termite, grasshopper, moth, beetle, and mite. Other recent discoveries are the iridescent virus (Xeros, 1954), the rhabdionvirus

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TABLE 1. *Types of Insect Viruses*

<i>Type</i>	<i>Inclusion Body</i>	<i>Nucleic Acid</i>	<i>Host</i>
*Nuclear polyhedrosis virus	Polyhedra	DNA	Lepidoptera, Hymenoptera, Diptera, Neuroptera
*Cytoplasmic polyhedrosis virus	Polyhedra	RNA	Lepidoptera, Diptera, Hymenoptera, Neuroptera
*Granulosis virus	Capsule	DNA	Lepidoptera
Poxvirus	Spherule	DNA	Lepidoptera, Coleoptera, Orthoptera
*Paillotiavirus	Polymorphic	?	Lepidoptera
Moratorvirus (*sacbrood, paralysis, flacherie, foulbrood)	None	RNA	Hymenoptera, Isoptera, Orthoptera, Lepidoptera, Coleoptera, Acarina
*Sigma virus	None	RNA	Diptera
Iridescent virus	None	DNA	Diptera, Lepidoptera, Coleoptera
Rhabdionvirus	None(?)	DNA	Coleoptera
Densonucleosisvirus	None	DNA	Lepidoptera

*Viruses known for over two decades.

(Huger, 1966), the poxvirus (Vago, 1963), and densonucleosisvirus (Vago, *et al.*, 1964).

The iridescent virus is a cubic virus, icosahedral in outline and produces, when viewed by reflected light, an iridescent color caused by the crystallization of the virus particles. In transmitted light, its color is amber to orange. These very interesting and optically beautiful viruses were first reported from the cranefly, *Tipula paludosa*, by Xeros (1954). The iridescence is also visible in the tissues of a severely infected insect. These viruses have also been found in Coleoptera and Lepidoptera.

An unusual virus which appears to exist in spherical to rod-shaped forms was found in the rhinoceros beetle, *Oryctes rhinoceros*, by Huger (1966), who called it the rhabdionvirus. This is the first virus that has been tested and found to be highly promising for the control of a beetle, *Oryctes rhinoceros* (Marschall, 1970).

Insect virus, very similar in structure and characteristic to the poxvirus of vertebrates, has been found in Coleoptera (Vago, 1963; Vago *et al.*, 1968) and Lepidoptera (Meynadier *et al.*, 1968; Roberts and Granados, 1968). The densonucleosisvirus is a DNA virus isolated from Lepidoptera (Vago *et al.*, 1964), and it resembles the papilloma virus, which causes warts in man.

Strains of Insect Viruses

Over twenty years ago, there was little attempt to differentiate strains of insect viruses, primarily because of limited study, and because of the lack of a sound basis to designate strains. Gershenson, in 1959, first observed that the shapes and sizes of the inclusion bodies of the nuclear-polyhedrosis virus were determined exclusively by the virus and not by the host. He isolated mutants with distinctly-shaped inclusion bodies.

In the cytoplasmic-polyhedrosis viruses, strains have also been separated by the shapes of the inclusion body. Professor Aruga and his colleagues (1961) have isolated strains with tetragonal (cuboidal) and hexagonal (icosahedral) polyhedra. In the granulosis virus, strains which form cubic inclusion bodies rather than the typical capsules have been isolated from the spruce budworm (Stairs, 1964a), and the codling moth (Stairs *et al.*, 1966).

Virus strains have been designated on the basis of virulence and pathogenicity. Strains, which differ in virulence, may occur in nuclear-polyhedrosis viruses from different localities or from different host species. Iridescent viruses may be related but differ in their pathogenicities.

The sigma virus of *Drosophila* has been most extensively studied in multicellular animals from the standpoint of genetics, and numerous genetic variations of this virus have been found (see Seecoff, 1968).

Serological and biochemical methods have been applied to establish relationships among insect viruses (Aleksandrov, 1965; Hukuhara and Hashimoto, 1966; Bellett and Inman, 1967; Kalmakoff and Tremaine, 1968; Cunningham and Longworth, 1968; Krywienzyk *et al.*, 1969).

Strains may express different pathologies within the host and may also possess different biological properties, such as a synergistic effect. Paillot described three virus diseases, pseudo-grasserie 1, 2 and 3, in a single insect species, the cutworm (Paillot, 1934; 1935; 1937). However, it is questionable whether these 3 granulosis-virus infections are caused by three strains or by three different types of viruses. In the mosquitoes, there are strains of iridescent viruses that produce different colors in the larva (Chapman, *et al.*, 1966; Woodard and Chapman, 1968).

In 1966 when we renewed our study on synergism, we found that the granulosis virus from Hawaii was contaminated with a cytoplasmic-polyhedrosis virus. Consequently, we obtained a clean sample from Oregon through Dr. G. Wittig. This Oregon strain, much to our surprise, did not enhance the infection of the nuclear-polyhedrosis virus in the armyworm larvae. This was very embarrassing, for it meant that all of our previous studies on synergism were incorrect. Although I was "shook up", I retested the Hawaii granulosis virus. The virus was first purified to remove the contaminating cytoplasmic-polyhedrosis virus. When the two strains were tested, the Hawaii isolate had a synergistic effect on the nuclear-polyhedrosis virus, while the Oregon isolate did not. Thus, much to my relief, there were two strains of the granulosis virus that produced similar pathologies, but differed in their synergistic properties (Tanada and Hukuhara, 1968).

The above difficulty suggested that we should also examine the nuclear-polyhedrosis virus collected from Hawaii in 1958 to 1960. Out of the inocula prepared from 17 larval specimens, only one inoculum produced the typical symptoms of nuclear-polyhedrosis virus infection. The

remaining inocula caused different signs and symptoms, such as, a yellow brown coloration rather than the typical pinkish white, the larvae took much longer to die, their tracheal and hypodermal cells were greatly hypertrophied, and the fat cells were not infected (Tanada *et al.*, 1969).

Although I have described several criteria by which strains have been designated for insect viruses, are these adequate for the establishment of strains? This would depend upon what we mean by a virus strain, or even a virus species! At present, we are not able to answer these questions.

Path of Virus Invasion Through the Midgut

A virus most commonly infects an insect through the mouth, into the midgut, and into the internal tissues. However, the actual mode of invasion of the virus through the midgut epithelium and into the hemocoel remained obscure until about two years ago. In 1968, Harrap and Robertson observed that a nuclear-polyhedrosis virus infected and developed in a few columnar midgut cells of the larva, and that some virus particles were found in the basement membrane. They concluded that the virus was first produced in the cells and then passed through the basement membrane into the hemocoel. Summers, in 1969, observed granulosus-virus particles in the microvilli of midgut cells within 2 hours after the virus had been fed to cabbage-looper larva. He also observed virus multiplication in the nuclei of midgut cells, and the presence of complete rods, some of which were contained within vesicles, in the cytoplasm. He speculated that the virus rods within the vesicles passed through the basement membrane and into the hemocoel.

Apparently about the same time that Summers was conducting his study, Ruth Leutenegger and I (1970) were also investigating a granulosus virus in the same host insect. Our results were essentially similar to those of Summers, but we did not find virus particles in the microvilli. However, we made additional observations that virus particles occurred in the intercellular spaces, in possibly the endoplasmic reticulum, and in the basement membrane. We have postulated two methods of virus invasion into the larval hemocoel after the virus particles had been freed from the inclusion bodies in the gut lumen. In the first method, the virus rods enter the intercellular space between two columnar cells and then into the basement membrane, and into the hemocoel. In the second method, the virus enters and multiplies in the nucleus of a midgut cell. The virus rods then pass into the cytoplasm, through the basement membrane and into the hemocoel. In either case, the passage of the virus through the basement membrane takes place as complete particles.

Interaction of Viruses Within the Insect's Body

There are numerous examples of mixed virus infections occurring in a single host insect. In only a few cases were the interactions of the

viruses carefully examined, and in some of these cases, interference and synergism were observed. Interference was reported when the insect larvae were fed different strains and types of insect viruses (Bird, 1959; 1969; Aruga *et al.*, 1961; Tanada *et al.*, 1969). Such interference occurred even when the interfering virus was inactivated by heat or ultraviolet light (Aruga *et al.*, 1961; 1962; 1963a, b; Aruga and Hashimoto, 1965).

I first observed synergism between a granulosis and a nuclear-polyhedrosis virus in the armyworm in 1956, while on the staff of the University of Hawaii. Since this study is familiar to some of you, I shall summarize briefly the results. The young larvae (first and second instars) were found highly susceptible to the two viruses. The older larvae were resistant when fed the viruses separately, but became highly susceptible when fed the viruses together, a synergistic interaction. Further studies in 1959, revealed that the granulosis virus was the synergist or activator for the nuclear-polyhedrosis virus, and the granulosis virus retained the enhancing capacity even when inactivated by heat.

In 1967, Dr. Hukuhara and I investigated the nature and characteristic of the enhancing factor, the site of its activity, and its mode of action. There was a direct increase in the number of larvae infected with the nuclear-polyhedrosis virus as the concentrations of the capsules of the granulosis virus increased (Tanada and Hukuhara, 1971). The granulosis virus increased the infectivity of the nuclear-polyhedrosis virus by as much as 10,000 times.

The evidence, therefore, is strong that the capsules enhance the infection of the nuclear-polyhedrosis virus, but the question arises, "Where is the enhancing activity located in the capsules?" The capsule protein was separated from the virus particle by treatment with alkali and was found to enhance the nuclear-polyhedrosis virus. Thus the active factor occurred in the capsule protein rather than in the virus rod. By means of column chromatography and acrylamide-gel electrophoresis, we found that the active fraction was not the major component of the capsule protein (Tanada and Watanabe, 1971). The site of action of this synergistic factor appeared to be in the midgut and not in the hemocoel.

Virus Toxins

I have found working with the Hawaii viruses very exciting and most interesting, and after our unusual findings on strains and on synergism, I did not expect any further rewards from them. But they seemed to have been blessed by the Kahuna. One of my students, Harry Kaya (1970) has made a very important discovery with the Hawaii viruses. He found that, in virus-infected armyworm larvae, a toxic factor was produced that killed the internal parasite, *Apanteles militaris*. This discovery, by Harry, is apparently the first record of a toxin formed in virus infections in invertebrates.

TABLE 2. Partial list of insects and mite which have been controlled with virus in field experiments during 1960 to 1970

Order	Species	Type of virus	Reference
Lepidoptera	<i>Adoxophyes reticulana</i>	Nuclear-polyhedrosis virus; cytoplasmic-polyhedrosis virus	Ponsen and de Jong, 1964
	<i>Agrotis segetum</i>	Granulosis virus	Dikasova, 1964
	<i>Choristoneura fumiferana</i>	Nuclear-polyhedrosis virus; granulosis virus	Stairs and Bird, 1962
	<i>Dendrolimus sibiricus</i>	Granulosis virus	Luk'yanchikov, 1964; Poltev, 1964
	<i>Dendrolimus spectabilis</i>	Cytoplasmic-polyhedrosis virus	Koyama and Katagiri, 1968; Katagiri, 1969
	<i>Heliothis virescens</i>	Nuclear-polyhedrosis virus	Allen <i>et al.</i> , 1967b; Montoya <i>et al.</i> , 1966
	<i>Heliothis zea</i>	Nuclear-polyhedrosis virus	Wolfenbarger, 1964; Ignoffo <i>et al.</i> , 1965; Falcon <i>et al.</i> , 1965; Allen <i>et al.</i> , 1967a,b; Montoya <i>et al.</i> , 1966; Young and Ham, 1966; Chapman and Bell, 1967; Oatman <i>et al.</i> , 1970
	<i>Hyphantria cunea</i>	Nuclear-polyhedrosis virus; granulosis virus	Oliver, 1964
	<i>Kotochalia junodi</i>	Nuclear-polyhedrosis virus	Ossowski, 1962
	<i>Laspeyresia pomonella</i>	Granulosis virus	Falcon <i>et al.</i> , 1968
	<i>Malacosoma disstria</i>	Nuclear-polyhedrosis virus	Stairs, 1964b; 1965
	<i>Malacosoma fragile</i>	Nuclear-polyhedrosis virus	Stelzer, 1965; 1967
	<i>Mamestria brassicae</i>	Nuclear-polyhedrosis virus	Akutsu, 1968
	<i>Oraesia emarginata</i>	Cytoplasmic-polyhedrosis virus	Oho, 1966
	<i>Orgyia pseudotsugata</i>	Nuclear-polyhedrosis virus	Morris, 1963

Order	Species	Type of virus	References
	<i>Pieris rapae</i>	Granulosis virus	Wilson, 1960; Fox and Jaques, 1966; Akutsu, 1968
	<i>Porthetria dispar</i>	Nuclear-polyhedrosis virus	Rollinson <i>et al.</i> , 1965; Magnoler, 1968
	<i>Porthetria fumida</i>	Nuclear-polyhedrosis virus; cytoplasmic-polyhedrosis virus	Koyama and Katagiri, 1967; Katagiri, 1969
	<i>Spodoptera frugiperda</i>	Nuclear-polyhedrosis virus	Young and Hamm, 1966
	<i>Thaumetopoea pityocampa</i>	Nuclear-polyhedrosis virus; cytoplasmic-polyhedrosis virus	Grisson, 1960; Sidor, 1965
	<i>Trichoplusia ni</i>	Nuclear-polyhedrosis virus	Genung, 1960; Elmore, 1961; Semel, 1961; Hofmaster and Ditman, 1961; Getzen, 1962; Ignoffo, 1964; Wolfenbarger, 1965; Woodall and Ditman, 1967
Hymenoptera	<i>Diprion hercyniae</i>	Nuclear-polyhedrosis virus	Bird and Burk, 1961
	<i>Neodiprion pratti pratti</i>	Nuclear-polyhedrosis virus	McIntyre and Dutky, 1961
	<i>Neodiprion sertifer</i>	Nuclear-polyhedrosis virus	Rivers, 1964; Sidor and Nikolić, 1966
	<i>Neodiprion swainei</i>	Nuclear-polyhedrosis virus	Smirnof, 1961; Smirnof <i>et al.</i> , 1962; Smirnof, 1964
Coleoptera	<i>Oryctes rhinoceros</i>	Rhabdionvirus	Marschall, 1970
Acarina	<i>Panonychus citri</i>	Moratorvirus	Gilmore, 1965; Shaw <i>et al.</i> , 1968a,b; Putman, 1970

I would have preferred to have Harry relate to you his discovery, which is a landmark in insect virology. However, I hope that some day you will permit him to describe his studies in detail.

Microbial Control

During the past decade, there has been a great increase in the number of field tests with viruses that resulted in satisfactory or promising control of insects. The list presented in Table 2 is incomplete, and does not include insects, such as the alfalfa caterpillar, that had been tested prior to the past decade, but it includes those that had been retested. The increase is not too surprising because about 300 different viruses have been described in over 250 insect species (Ignoffo, 1968). Thus, many more viruses await field testing.

Since there is no time to discuss all of the examples, I shall confine myself only to the control of the corn earworm, *Heliothis zea*, with a nuclear-polyhedrosis virus. This insect has been most thoroughly investigated as far as microbial control with virus is concerned. The methodology and technology of the use of the virus have been worked out, and the virus has been found effective under field conditions by many workers. Its virulence and pathogenicity for *Heliothis zea* have been established; methods have been developed for mass propagation; field application techniques have been developed, including the use of the virus with attractants, adjuvants, and chemical insecticides; and this virus has been found harmless to vertebrates (see Ignoffo, 1968).

I shall discuss the control of *Heliothis* on two crops: sweet corn and cotton. When I transferred to California, I selected as a project the microbial control of *Heliothis* on sweet corn, because this would offer a severe test on the effectiveness of pathogens for the control of insects of low economic threshold. Some of my colleagues greatly doubted my judgment. They predicted a failure since they believed that pathogens took too long to kill an insect, such as the corn earworm, where a single larva may cause damage before dying from the pathogen. However, they did not realize that certain pathogens, when applied to first- and second-instar larvae, can kill an insect within 1-2 days, almost as fast as some chemical insecticides. Moreover, in some cases, the insects stop feeding shortly after ingesting the pathogen.

Our studies showed that the virus was nearly as effective as the standard insecticide, DDT (Tanada and Reiner, 1962). The criterion that we used as the basis for control was that an ear was considered damaged if a single kernel was eaten. Our study was apparently the first favorable attempt at controlling *Heliothis zea* on sweet corn with pathogens.

Other workers, however, reported unsatisfactory results. Anderson *et al.* (1963) used the same severe criterion that we had used, and obtained results in Southern California that showed the virus to be inferior to DDT. Recently, Oatman *et al.* (1970) working under similar conditions in South-

ern California, used a less severe criterion for control based on "marketable ears" (i.e., less than 25% of the ear from the tip injured by larval feeding) as defined by the Agricultural Code of California. Their results were: 77-87% marketable ears with virus sprays, and 91-100% marketable ears with virus dust.

The control of corn earworm on cotton with the virus has been conducted in several states, such as California, Mississippi, and Texas. Generally, the reports have been very favorable, and in some cases better control has been obtained than with the standard insecticides, usually DDT-Toxaphene. Several workers, such as Falcon *et al.* (1965), Allen *et al.* (1967a), Fernandez *et al.* (1969) have attempted to integrate the virus into the pest control program of cotton.

The future of viruses for insect control is very promising but, at present, there are two major obstacles: (1) no virus has yet been approved for commercial applications by FDA, and (2) the problem of mass production and the cost of the virus to the farmers.

Epizootiology

Some significant progress has taken place in the interaction of insect populations and viruses. I shall confine myself to two aspects: (1) the interrelation between virus and host density, and (2) the persistence of viruses in the soil habitat.

The general belief is that virus epizootics develop spontaneously with a very high host density. This belief is not completely correct because studies, prior to the past decade, with the sawfly by Bird and Elgee (1957), and our studies with the armyworm (Tanada, 1961), showed that virus epizootics generally begin from a low incidence that increases as the host density increases; a typical density dependent factor. Recently, this has been shown with the nuclear-polyhedrosis viruses and populations of the eye-spotted bud moth (Jaques and Stultz, 1966), and the gypsy moth (Doane, 1970).

The most extensive study on virus epizootics has been conducted during the past decade with a nonoccluded virus and the citrus red mite, *Panonychus citri*. Gilmore and Munger (1965) reported that, in laboratory tests, the incidence of virus infection in the citrus red mite increased progressively with host density. In the field, Shaw *et al.* (1968b) found low mite populations with a low incidence of virus infections (enzootic). The high incidence of disease was correlated with high mite density, and invariably, epizootics developed in large populations.

During the past five years, we have sampled in alfalfa fields the populations of the beet armyworm, *Spodoptera exigua*, the alfalfa caterpillar, *Colias eurytheme*, the alfalfa looper, *Autographa californica*, and the armyworm, *Pseudaletia unipuncta*. We have found that virus-infected larvae occur even at a very low host density. This is especially true of the alfalfa

looper during the spring months, when less than one larva per alfalfa clump is present, yet over 50% of the larvae are infected with virus. In the beet armyworm, which is the most abundant Lepidoptera in our studies, the incidence of virus infection increases with a rise in host density.

Thus, evidence is accumulating that a virus epizootic usually begins with a low incidence of virus infection in the population. The question arises, how is the virus infection initiated in a population of low density? I shall now discuss one of the possible sources from which the virus may gain access to an insect population. This is the soil habitat.

The first demonstration that virus persisted in the soil was made by Thompson and Steinhaus in 1950 with the nuclear-polyhedrosis virus of the alfalfa caterpillar. An increasing number of workers have made similar observations (Jaques, 1964; 1967; 1969; 1970a, b; David, 1965). Jaques observed that the viruses of the cabbage looper and the imported cabbageworm did not diminish appreciably in the soil surface. About 25% of the original viruses that he applied were still present after 5 years. He reported that the viruses, applied to the soil, protected the plants against the cabbage looper and the cabbageworm much longer than the virus, which had been sprayed on the plants.

During the past three years, we have tested the soils in alfalfa fields to determine whether they contained viruses during different periods of the year, especially after the winter months when rainfall is the highest and when the plants usually wither to the ground. The soils were fed to the alfalfa caterpillar, beet armyworm, alfalfa looper, armyworm, and cabbage looper. We have found that several viruses and a microsporidian are able to persist in the field soil.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I wish to remind you that I have touched upon, only briefly, a portion of the recent advances in insect virology. Although insect virology has not yet attained the levels of plant and vertebrate virology, its progress and development have been very significant during the past decade, and this science has attained a modicum of sophistication and has attracted the attention of other virologists, including molecular biologists. I visualize that in the coming decade, insect viruses will play a very important role, not only in microbial control, but also in virology, in general, if for no other reason than because of such diverse forms of insect viruses.

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